BriDgeS

VOL. V, No.1 — The EOM Newsletter — FEBRUARY, 1982

"Biblical Bridges Serving Gay/Lesbian Lifestyles"

FROM THE CHAPLAIN'S DESK

"PILGRIMS IN COMMUNITY"

It used to be a pratice for persons either individually or in groups to make a pilgrimage, a journey entered into from religious motives, to a sacred place. Whereas today few Christians have the resources to make a trip to the Holy Lands many substitute a weekly pilgrimage to their local houses of worship. This is good, however, in a larger sense it is the spiritual motive that is of greater importance than where one goes geographically. Jesus said that true worship is not a matter of being in the right places but of Spirit and Truth. This then is our pilgrimage, a journey through life expressing and seeking more of God's Spirit and Truth, all to the honour and glory of Christ.

Although this journey is intensely personal it is never private and therefore it is to be traveled in community. By being a community in pilgrimage we share the joys and sorrows, the labors and the rewards, we strengthen each other, reassure each other, as together we press on toward the goal of being faithful to our Saviour, Jesus Christ. When physically we travel in each others company it is especially joyous, however, even if we are miles apart in distance we still can travel together in heart, mind and spirit.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first steps and so it is in our spiritual journey. In the course of the months ahead EOM will be traveling such a pilgrimage as a community of believers.

We hope you will be able to join us along the way.

-The Rev. Jack Vaiden

ED.NOTE: Appointments for personal counsel with our chaplain may be made by contacting EOM. Letters may also be sent c/o of EOM

CELEBRATE LOVE - VALENTINE'S DAY

Lacy hearts, roses and fat little cupids at EOM? Well--who knows, and besides what better time to rejoice in God's Love for us all & our love for each other? Yes, Sunday, Valentine's Day, Feb.14th at 4PM EOM will meet to Celebrate Love. Chaplain Vaiden will be speaking, there will be refreshments and games and, who knows, you might just get a Valentine from that secret admirer. Come and be with us at 705 Piedmont Ave. Apt.23.

RETREAT

EOM will sponsor its First Spring Retreat from Friday evening March 26 til Sunday A.M. March 28th. We hope to have the use of a cabin in N.Ga.(details to follow).

COST: $10.00 reservation fee which is due by March 15th. (This fee includes dinner on Friday, three meals on Saturday and brunch Sunday!)A late reservation fee will be charged for those coming after the 15th of March of $15.00. (space available)

SCHEDULE: Friday evening a pastor from Oakhurst Baptist Church will be with us. Chaplain Vaiden will be conducting the workshops and services on Saturday and we will end Sunday with a Praise Service and the Lords Supper. Saturday afternoon is purposely being left open so that private talks can be scheduled with Pastor Vaiden or with other EOM leadership.(others may want to use this time for enjoying the beautiful outdoors.)

WHAT TO BRING: Casual clothes, sleeping bag or bedding (we will be "roughing it"!)

We hope that many of our regional friends will plan to be with us. We look for a time of concentrated spiritual growth as we worship, eat and live together as a family. Each of us on our personal pilgrimage but all of us learning how to be "PILGRIMS IN COMMUNITY."

ONE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

I am a recently born-again, Spirit-filled Christian first, and a Gay person second. I now know just how immense and boundless God's love really is for ALL people.

I searched for Christ off and on, mostly off, for around fifteen years. When I became aware of my Gayness, I was entering my adolescence. Back in those days, being Gay (or queer, as it was called) meant just what you did in bed and was considered an abominable sin in God's eyes. Advice on homosexuality during those days just wasn't. I can remember dying inside one Sunday listening to my minister tell me and his congregation that "those queers were going to forever fry in hell for the choice they made." I thought I knew Christ then. So if it seemed to be God's Will for me to not be homosexual, then I'd do something about it. I searched for ANY information I could get my hands on about homosexuality and its "cure". I prayed about it but nothing happened. That was when I started going into my closet.

Over the years, I saw several people I knew become born-again Christians. I thought they were foolish and fanatics, and besides, I was delighting in my agnosticism. I rationalized that if God was not a personal God who was not interested in me, then God must not care about my homosexuality either.

Starting in the early seventies, Satan dealt me a blow with alcoholism. Over four years went by that is mostly a blur. I tried to stop drinking on my own several times to no avail. It was ONLY when I asked God for help did I ever start on the road to sobriety. God and I went far then--to a point. Gay Christians were animals unheard of to me then, so I fell deeper into my closet. Sobriety stayed with me but I shudder to think what an easy target I must have been to Satan.

Several years later, a close friend of mine dedicated her life to Christ. That was my closest example of the workings of Christ. We started growing in Christ together. She went all the way, but I stopped short of truely accepting Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. The issue of my being Gay rose its head. So I started my closet game again and all seemed well -- but empty.

In March, 1981, I noticed in an issue of a gay publication an advertisement for EOM. The ad clearly stated, as no other ad did, that it was Scriptural to be Gay AND Christian. I half-heartly responded and was welcomed with open arms. Through literature EOM offered, support and especially prayer (their's and mine), God opened my blind eyes and deaf ears to the fact that Jesus was loving me and wanting to offer me abundant and eternal life ALL ALONG, just as with anybody else. September,1981, I dedicated my life to Christ. I started telling everybody about Jesus!

At a dizzying pace I started growing in the Faith and Spirit. But I was living in my closet, I was still living my lie. I then read in the Bible that Faith without actions is dead faith. Actions BECAUSE of faith in Christ IS God's Will. I attended my first EOM meeting in December, 1981. I met my first Gay Christians. I was never as close to my Saviour as I was at that meeting.

But EOM is out of town for me. They at EOM made me realize that to fully grow in the Faith and Spirit takes constant Gay Christian fellowship or else die spiritually. So I am acting on my Faith and have attended a local Gay fellowship. I do not yet know if this church will be for me. But my faith today is strong enough to know that there is nothing I and the Holy Spirit cannot handle together. As the song says, "Don't give up, don't give in, give it all to Him... For look at how far you've come!"

I have recently been told that I have brought two of my friends to Christ! THIS IS truely the abundant life Jesus promised!!!

-LDF, Birmingham, Alabama *

* L----attends a local independent Charismatic Church and works as a computer programmer. Although he lives in Birmingham he has become a faithful and active member of EOM. We look forward to him being with us in March for our Retreat.

1982 - MOVING BEYOND CRISIS

What a wonder, EOM has now survived four years! Experience has taught us, unlike so many others, that a chief test of success is not big money and overflowing crowds but longevity,"will you be here 20 years from now?"

EOM folk are people on spiritual pilgrimage and we have chosen the theme "PILGRIMS IN COMMUNITY" for 1982. Our journey so far has been largely characterized by short term projects--born out of various states of crisis. Since Homecoming the Holy Spirit seems to be moving us beyond crisis programming into new areas of long term planned growth. This January EOM's membership has adopted goals which reflect the Spirit's wooing.

This year we will formally seek incorporation, adopt a budget and mount a major membership drive. Other 1982 goals include:

- Continuing the development of regional imput in the areas of dialogue, enrichment and outreach
- Utilizing our Chaplain in developing the Christian Leadership table-talks and non-gay support
- Developing EOM programs which emphasize the Christian in community and also in the world around us
- In addition to our own publications, developing joint educational resources and ads with other progay evangelical organizations.

These goals are modest ones but accurately depict the current level of energy and resources available. A few have chosen to risk making the pilgrimage with us, moving from Spectator - "Look what that crazy group is trying to do now", to Cheerleader - "Keep up the good work", to a few who are actually playing in the game. Commitment isn't easy, you just might get bruised out on the playing field. Many don't understand a ministry that's not a church and yet is not just a lobby or just another navel-gazing rap group.

Praise God some are indeed journeying beyond the emptiness of isolation and have entered into the joy and deep fulfillment of teamwork, of community.

God in Christ, calls all Christians to interconnectiveness and we invite you this year to join with other pilgrims in exploring community together.

GOD BLESS!

David Lewing

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NEWS FLASHES

The Rev. Julian Rush, a Minister of Education at 1st Methodist Church in Boulder, Colorado was dismissed from his church after coming out to the pastor and church board. HOWEVER, the same Bishop who dismissed him has appointed him to a new position which is being called a "breakthrough for new forms of ministry". The Rev. Rush has been appointed as Minister of Outreach and Community Affairs for St. Paul's Methodist Church, a church in a predominantly gay area of Denver.

from THE ADVOCATE

Our congratulations to The Rev. Joe Chancy on his recent ordination to the Unitarian Church. Joe also serves as Chair of the gay Religious Council and is a good friend of EOM.

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Congratulations and best wishes to Metropolitan Community Church-Atlanta as they celebrate their tenth aniversary. Many activities are planned between now and Easter.

FILE CABINET NEEDED: EOM is in need of a 2 drawer,locked,metal file cabinet. At this point EOM correspondence and resource material are spilling out of cardboard boxes and finding things becomes a "major project"! If someone has a file cabinet they would like to donate or if you would like to contribute funds to purchase one it would be greatly appreciated. (A new file cabinet would cost about $75.00, however, we can use a used one that is in good shape.)

LETTERS

I praise the Lord for your ad in THE ADVOCATE...I have been both baptized of the Spirit and of the water and am Born-Again in Jesus. Yet at times I feel convicted about being gay by the religious narrowmindness of my fellowship group. I fear that in their stone-throwing understanding of the Gospel of Christ, they might condemn me right out of the Church...With His precious Word hid in my heart I have the assurance that Jesus loves me. Although like a thorn, the non-acceptance of my Church still troubles me...

-BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

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I would greatly-prayerfully appreciate hearing from you & hopefully I can find other Christian gay people with whom to correspond...God has been actively expressing Himself through my life and I feel a real leading of the Holy Spirit...

-WASHINGTON STATE

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...my lover and I have been under a lot recently with death and illness in the family...We feel that ever since I made the first contact with EOM that we have had brothers and sisters in Christ praying for us and with us...Both___and I are getting our lives in better order and hope to start attending EOM functions.... *

-METRO ATLANTA

*How sad that so many like this couple don't let us minister to them in their needs. Its hard to be a support structure when your shut out.

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...My interest in your ministry seems to be ever growing at least in my heart though I have not been steadily communicating with you...With our ever growing family we embrace more varieties of lifestyle. The warmth with which you embrace those of the Gay Lifestyle is a 'vision of God' I would want for our people. I may be the very one called to challenge them with this very need of heart and life. God through time will reveal..

-Rev.-- ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

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..I had written a letter..I wanted to attend your meetings in Atlanta,then I got scared.I've spent 20 yrs in the closet and when I finally opened the door, I was afraid of the light... I need assurances and prayers.....

-CLEMSON, S.CAROLINA

BUDGETS & PLEDGES

This year for the first time EOM has adopted a budget. (copies available upon request). We are able to consider this because a few members of EOM have become regular monthly contributors. In order to encourage others to give on a more regular basis we are including with your newsletter a PLEDGE CARD. Please consider prayerfully what portion of your tithe and offerings should go to EOM and fill out your card. From the beginning EOM has been a faith ministry relying totally on God's people to supply our needs - God has been faithful. Pledge Cards do not alter this concept - we are still relying totally on the leading of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians to meet our needs. However, if members and friends will make pledges this will enable us to be better stewards of God's resources and to plan more efficiently how to use what has been entrusted to us.

A SPECIAL PLEA TO OUR NON-GAY FRIENDS: EOM is a bridge building ministry of reconciliation reaching to the Church on one hand and to the Lesbian/Gay Communities on the other. However, the cost of EOM's dialogue in both directions has up to now been 99% underwritten by concerned gay Christians. Isn't time you too shared in this ministry?

TIME CHANGE

EOM continues to meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 705 Piedmont Ave. #23 however, the time has been moved up to 4:00PM so that people going to evening Church services won't feel so rushed. COME AND BE WITH US!

PRAYER & PRAISE CORNER

PRAY - for our retreat that it may be a time of great spiritual growth for all who attend

PRAISE - God for hearts that are being reached especially at Clemson U.

PRAY - for God's leading as we seek incorporation and the writing of By-Laws

PRAISE - God for supplying all of our needs in 1981

PRAY - For isolated and lonely gay Christians especially D___, S_____, R____ M_____and L___ & R_____.